



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

**Food Safety  
and Inspection  
Service**

**FSIS Directive  
4430.1**

**Revision 6**

# **Performance Evaluation Plan**

**PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PLAN**

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

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# FSIS DIRECTIVE

4430.1  
Revision 6

12/16/09

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## PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PLAN

### PART ONE—BASIC PROVISIONS

#### I. PURPOSE

This directive:

- A. Defines FSIS performance appraisal policy for all employees except:
  - 1. SES members. (**NOTE:** The USDA SES Performance Management Plan covers SES members.)
  - 2. Employees under excepted appointments on intermittent work schedules appointed in Schedule A of 5 CFR 213, Excepted Service.
  - 3. Senior Level employees.
- B. Establishes a results-oriented performance culture which aligns performance expectations with the Agency's mission, performance goals, and objectives.
- C. Establishes procedures for measurable results-oriented and competency-linked performance standards.
- D. Communicates and clarifies FSIS goals and objectives while identifying individual accountability for accomplishing organizational goals and objectives.
- E. Holds supervisors and managers accountable for managing performance.

#### II. CANCELLATION

This directive cancels FSIS Directive 4430.1, dated 7/14/06.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**  
Electronic

**OPI:**  
HRP – Performance, Compensation  
and Policy Branch

### III. REASON FOR REISSUANCE

This directive:

- A. Incorporates changes implemented by USDA's performance management system.
- B. Changes the performance rating period to October 1 through September 30 of the following calendar year.
- C. Changes the rating process to include pay pool panels for employees covered under Public Health Human Resources System (PHHRS).

### IV. REFERENCES

FSIS Directive 4335.1, Merit Promotion Plan  
FSIS Directive 4351.1, Reduction-In-Force  
FSIS Directive 4451.1, Incentive Awards Program  
FSIS Directive 4531.1, Within-Grade Increase  
FSIS Directive 4735.3, Employee Responsibilities and Conduct  
FSIS Directive 4771.1, Administrative Grievance System

FSIS Strategic Plan  
FSIS PHHRS Demonstration Project Policies & Procedures Handbook

5 CFR 213, Excepted Service  
5 CFR 430, Performance Management  
5 U.S.C. Chapter 23, Merit System Principles  
5 U.S.C. Chapter 45, Incentive Awards

### V. ABBREVIATIONS

The following appear in their shortened form in this directive.

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EO/CR	Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights
HRO	Human Resources Operations
HRP	Human Resources Policy
LMA	Labor Management Agreement
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
PCPB	Performance and Compensation Policy Branch
PHHRS	Public Health Human Resources System
PIP	Performance Improvement Plan
QSI	Quality Step Increase
RIF	Reduction-In-Force
SES	Senior Executive Service
U.S.C.	United States Code
WGI	Within-Grade Increase

**VI. POLICY**

It is FSIS policy to:

- A. Encourage excellence in performance by establishing an objective, job-related, competency-linked, and results-oriented performance appraisal system linking to the Agency's strategic plan.
- B. Encourage employee participation in the establishment of fair, measurable, and results-oriented performance standards.
- C. Use performance ratings as a basis to reward employees and process other personnel actions.
- D. Provide means to reduce or withhold pay increases for less than fully successful performance rated Unacceptable.

**VII. DEFINITIONS**

See Attachment 1-1 for a listing of definitions used in this directive.

**VIII. AUTHORITY**

The provisions in this directive meet the Department's requirements of 5 U.S.C., Chapter 45, Incentive Awards and 5 CFR Part 430, Performance Management.

**IX. SUPPLEMENTING THIS ISSUANCE**

The Chief, PCPB approves all exceptions that may apply, and written issuances that concern the performance plan's procedures, policies, or interpretations. The LMA supplements this directive for bargaining unit employees and takes precedence when conflicts arise between the directive and the LMA. The PHRS handbook supplements this directive for covered employees.

**X. USES OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

Performance is continuously evaluated. The ongoing evaluation process:

- A. Communicates and clarifies the Agency's mission and goals.
- B. Identifies individual accountability for accomplishing the Agency's mission and goals.

C. Strengthens the supervisor and employee relationship through effective communication when establishing the performance plan, progress review, and final evaluation.

D. Assists the supervisor and employee with analyzing how to improve individual and organization effectiveness.

XI. **PERSONNEL DECISIONS AFFECTED BY PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

A. **WGI.** To grant or withhold a WGI is based upon an employee's performance rating within an appropriate waiting period. An eligible employee must have a Fully Successful or better to be eligible for a WGI. (**NOTE:** WGIs only apply to employees who are not covered under the PHRS pay-for-performance demonstration project.)

B. **Promotions and Other Competitive Selections.** Performance ratings are considered when evaluating an employee for promotion, reassignment to positions with greater promotion potential, or for training under competitive procedures. An employee cannot receive a career promotion unless their current rating of record is Fully Successful or higher. (See FSIS Directive 4335.1, Merit Promotion Plan.)

C. **Awards.** Performance is considered when recommending employees for performance awards and distinguishing between levels of performance. (See FSIS Directive 4451.1, Incentive Awards Program.)

D. **QSI.** An increase can be granted to an employee whom receives an Outstanding performance rating. (**NOTE:** Only those employees who are not covered under the PHRS pay-for-performance demonstration project are eligible for a QSI.)

E. **Training and Development.** The performance appraisal process provides information useful to determine the employee's training and development needs.

F. **RIF.** When a RIF occurs, an employee is entitled to receive:

1. Additional service credit based on the employee's three most recent ratings of record received during the 4-year period before the date of the RIF Notice. The calculation for each performance level is:

a. **Outstanding (Level 5) rating,** use 20 years to calculate the mathematical average.

b. **Superior (Level 4) rating,** use 16 years to calculate the mathematical average.

c. **Fully Successful (Level 3) rating**, use 12 years to calculate the mathematical average. (**EXAMPLE:** An employee received annual performance ratings of record for the last 3 years of Superior (16), Superior (16), and Fully Successful (12). To determine the retention standard, use the following example:  $16 + 16 + 12 = 44$ , divided by  $3 = 14.6$ , which rounds up to 15.) Therefore, the employee would receive 15 years of additional service credit.

2. Credit for the last three annual performance ratings within the 4-year period immediately preceding the date of the RIF notice.

3. Credit for performance based on modal rating if the employee did not receive a rating during the 4-year period.

**G. Reassignment, Demotion, or Removal for Unacceptable Performance.**

1. The supervisor must assist employees with improving a less than Fully Successful performance rating. Assistance can include, but is not limited to formal training, on-the-job training, counseling, and closer supervision. If an employee's performance is unacceptable in one or more critical elements at any time during the performance appraisal cycle, the supervisor must:

a. Inform the employee in writing of the standard(s) or requirement(s) to meet for a Fully Successful performance.

b. Provide an opportunity period to demonstrate a Fully Successful performance.

2. Management can reduce grade, remove, or reassign employees who continue to have an unacceptable performance. (See Part Two, Section Two, paragraph VII.)

**XII. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Supervisors are ultimately responsible for:

A. Ensuring that employees with limited access to e-mail, *InsideFSIS*, and the Internet receive a copy of this issuance.

B. Using this directive and the appropriate appraisal forms to establish performance elements and standards and designate elements as critical or non-critical within 30 days of the employee's entrance on duty.

C. Orienting the employee on all aspects of this directive.

D. Providing a copy of the performance elements and standards to the employee.

- E. Using this directive along with:
  - 1. The LMA to manage the work performance for bargaining unit employees.
  - 2. The PHRS handbook to manage the work performance for covered employees.

### XIII. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT STAGES**

Effective performance management requires supervisory and employee involvement at each stage of the performance management process. The stages of performance management are:

A. **Setting Performance Standards and Communicating Expectations.** Performance elements are established and explained in Part Two, Section One.

B. **Monitoring Performance and Providing Continuous Feedback.** Supervisors offer continuous feedback, conduct progress reviews, provide or arrange for training, and document the process. For additional information, see Part Two, Section Two, paragraph V.

C. **Developing the Capacity to Perform.** Employee developmental needs are evaluated and addressed through training, giving assignments that introduce new skills or higher levels of responsibility, improving work processes, or other methods.

D. **Appraising Performance.** This usually occurs at the end of the performance rating period but can occur at other times and involves a written performance appraisal. See Part Two, Section Two, paragraph VI. for additional information.

E. **Taking Action to Recognize, Reward, or Correct Performance.** A supervisor can formally or informally recognize an employee's performance accomplishments. If performance is below standard, the supervisor initiates one of several corrective actions. For additional information, see Part One, paragraph XI.

### XIV. **TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

The Agency makes performance management training materials available and accessible to all employees. Training can be delivered via classroom instruction, distance learning, computer-based instruction, or other combinations.

A. **Supervisory Training.**

- 1. New supervisors are expected to complete:

a. Initial training on the FSIS performance appraisal system (see subparagraph XIV. B. 1.) before establishing performance plans, providing progress reviews, or completing performance appraisals.

b. Formal training (see subparagraph XIV. B. 2.) before their supervisory probationary period ends, or as soon as possible.

2. All supervisors will receive additional training and guidance when changes to the performance management system occur.

**B. Components of Supervisory Performance Management Training.**

1. New supervisors receive the Performance Management Guidebook for Supervisors when they enter their position. The Guidebook outlines the supervisor's role and responsibilities pertaining to performance management. The new supervisor is expected to review the information and complete a self-certification of completion before setting performance standards for their direct reports. The next-level supervisor maintains the self-certifications.

2. All new supervisors receive formal training on the performance management system. It is intended that new supervisors take and successfully complete training within their supervisory probationary period or as soon as possible. Training is delivered in partnership with the Center for Learning. HRP is responsible for the curriculum.

3. Reviewing officials provide new supervisors with close guidance and oversight and use the Performance Management Guidebook for Supervisors between receiving initial and formal training. This activity ensures new supervisors have adequate understanding of the performance management system. It is also an integral part when training new supervisors to effectively lead employees.

**C. Relation to Supervisory Performance Element.** The performance management process is a fundamental supervisory responsibility. To master this process, supervisors need the necessary tools and leadership skills to effectively coach, guide, and mentor employees. The Agency includes performance management as a significant component of the Supervision performance element. All employees new to supervisory responsibilities in FSIS must complete performance management training (see subparagraph XIV. A.) within the prescribed timeframes or sooner. Supervision is a mandatory critical element for employees officially classified as supervisors and who rate employees. There can be exceptions to this rule (**example:** employees classified as supervisors but do not rate employees). Contact PCPB for questions on exceptions at 202-720-6287.

## DEFINITIONS

**Advisory Rating.** An informal, unofficial written record of an employee's performance while on assignment to another supervisor or program area less than 90 days. Any information used in assigning ratings will be in writing from other immediate supervisor(s).

**Appraisal Period.** An established period of time for which an employee's performance will be reviewed. This timeframe is normally 12 months and a final rating of record is prepared.

**Appraisal Unit.** The weighted value assigned to critical and non-critical elements.

**Competency.** A measurable or observable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.

**Critical Element.** A performance component designated by the supervisor, of such importance to the position, that performance below the Fully Successful level requires remedial action and can be basis for removing or demoting the employee. An element rating of Does Not Meet Fully Successful on any critical element will result in a rating of Unacceptable.

**Decision Table.** A matrix used for deriving a summary rating level from the appraisal of individual performance elements.

**Element Rating.** The level of performance on each individual element that is determined by comparing accomplishments to the performance standard. Element rating levels are: Exceeds Fully Successful, Meets Fully Successful, or Does Not Meet Fully Successful. (**NOTE:** The Meets Successful level is equivalent to the Department element rating level of Fully Successful.)

**Interim Rating.** A formal written record of an employee's performance required by a change in circumstances before the end of the appraisal period with a summary rating level assigned. Interim ratings must cover a minimum time period of 90 days. Interim ratings are combined to form a rating of record.

**Measures.** Quantitative or qualitative assessments of an employee's work results which appropriately address outputs or outcomes (products or services) for which the employee is responsible. Activities by themselves are not adequate measures.

**Modal Rating.** A summary rating level assigned most frequently among the actual ratings of record that are:

- Assigned under the summary level pattern that applies to the employee's position of record on the date of the RIF notice.
- Given within the same competitive area, or at the Agency's option within a larger subdivision of the Agency or Agencywide.
- On record for the most recently completed appraisal period prior to the date of issuance of RIF notices or the cutoff date the Agency specifies prior to the issuance of RIF notices. No new ratings will be put on record after the cutoff date.

**Non-critical Element.** A performance component of an employee's position which does not meet the definition of a critical element, but is of sufficient importance to warrant written appraisal and assignment of an element rating.

**Pay-for-Performance.** A pay system designed to improve workforce performance and promote mission accomplishment by making employees' pay increases more performance-sensitive. Performance ratings will provide the basis for performance-related decisions such as pay, rewards, assignment, employee development, promotion, and retention. Only Fully Successful and higher performers receive pay increases and the best performers receive the largest pay adjustments.

**Performance.** The accomplishment of assigned duties and responsibilities by an employee, based on a comparison of the employee's work results with established standards for the employee's position.

**Performance Element.** The duties and responsibilities for which an employee is held accountable and responsible, and for which a rating is given.

**Performance Plan.** All of the written results-oriented performance elements, standards, and goals and objectives that document expected performance.

**PIP.** A formal document that initiates a performance improvement period. The plan identifies:

- The critical element the employee is failing.
- What the employee must do to bring performance to the Fully Successful level.
- The timeframe provided to improve performance.
- The assistance that is offered.
- The consequences of failure to bring performance to the Fully Successful level.

**Performance Standard.** The management approved description of the performance thresholds, requirements, results, or expectations that must be met to get appraised at a particular summary rating level.

- A performance standard may include, but is not limited to factors such as:
  - Quality.
  - Quantity.
  - Cost-efficiency.
  - Timeliness.
  - Manner of Performance.
- Performance standards are applied to an employee's work results in the context of:
  - Organizational goals.
  - Objectives.
  - Annual plans.
  - Standard operating procedures.
  - Customer service standards.
  - Professional standards.
  - Management controls.
  - Other similar references.

**Progress Review.** The communication between the supervisor and their employees about performance compared to performance standards, elements, goals, and underlying core and technical competencies.

**Rating of Record.** The official final performance summary for a specified rating year. It is used as the basis for various other personnel actions (**examples:** performance awards, WGIs, and the calculation of service credit during a RIF).

**Rating Supervisor.** An official who oversees one or more employees and who has the responsibility to:

- Set performance standards.
- Communicate performance expectations.
- Monitor performance and provide feedback.
- Appraise performance.
- Take action to recognize, reward, or correct performance.

(**NOTE:** The position descriptions of some rating supervisors are not titled “supervisory” because they do not meet OPM titling criteria. These positions do not require a supervisory probationary period.)

**Results.** Measurable employee accomplishments linked to organizational and job-specific missions, goals, products, and services, which take the form of an output or outcome.

(**NOTE:** Activities, competencies, and behaviors are not results, but can lead to desired results.)

**Reviewing Official.** A higher level supervisor whom concurs with the rating official’s determination of an employee’s performance before the rating is issued to the employee. Assistant Administrators may require a designated reviewing official to review performance plans before plans are put into place, and to review all ratings of record before they are issued.

**Summary Rating.** The written record of performance and appraisal of each critical and non-critical element, and assignment of a summary rating level.

**Summary Rating Level.** The five summary levels of performance achievement which include:

- **Unacceptable (Level 1).** Performance that does not meet established Fully Successful performance standards in one or more critical elements of the employee's position. When performance is unacceptable, corrective action must be taken consistent with required procedures.
- **Marginal (Level 2).** Performance that needs improvement to achieve the Fully Successful level. This may be evidenced by the need for close supervisory review, discussion, and correction of work products.

- **Fully Successful (Level 3).** Performance that is of good quality as established in the employee's standards. A Fully Successful employee produces the expected quantity of work and meets deadlines or schedules for completion of work.
- **Superior (Level 4).** Performance that is of unusually good or excellent quality as established in the employee's standards. A superior employee produces a very high quantity of work ahead of established deadlines or schedules and with less than normal supervision.
- **Outstanding (Level 5).** Performance that is of rare, very high quality as established in the employees standards. An outstanding employee produces an exceptional quantity of work, significantly ahead of established deadlines or schedules, and with very little supervision. Performance for each element consistently exceeds the Fully Successful level in the demonstration of core and technical competencies, and achievement of tangible results supporting the organization's mission and program goals.

## **PART TWO—PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCESS**

### **Section One—Establishing Elements and Standards**

#### **I. PERFORMANCE PLANS**

A. A performance work plan aligns individual performance with organizational goals. The performance plan focuses on results as well as job behaviors (**example:** competency indicators) that show the possession of competencies known to lead to desired results. Reviewing results and assessing competencies differs from merely cataloging activity. A correctly implemented performance plan reflects the mutual understanding between supervisor and employee of:

1. The desired results to be achieved that support the mission, goals, and objectives of the Agency and program.

2. The specified methods, tools, and approaches that lead to effectiveness and efficiency in a given occupation or role.

B. Each covered employee receives a written performance plan at the beginning of the appraisal. The performance plan includes the dates of the appraisal period and the written performance elements and standards. Supervisors tailor performance standards to demonstrate linkage to the Agency's mission and strategic plan.

#### **II. APPRAISAL PERIOD TIMEFRAMES**

##### **A. Length of Appraisal Period.**

1. The appraisal period is normally 12 months. The minimum amount of time in which a supervisor makes an objective appraisal is 90 days.

2. A formal appraisal is not given unless performance elements and standards were established and communicated to the employee, and the employee served under these elements and standards for 90 days or more.

B. **Time of Appraisal.** The annual appraisal period for employees covered by this directive is October 1 through September 30.

### III. PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS AND STANDARDS

A. Supervisors should seek employee participation in establishing performance elements and standards. However, management officials retain final authority when there is a disagreement, since management is accountable for the assignment of work. Each Assistant Administrator can establish program-specific performance elements and standards for groups of like positions. Each Assistant Administrator must obtain PCPB approval before implementing and modifying program specific elements and standards. This ensures consistency with FSIS policy and maintains the integrity of the standards. See Part One, paragraph IX for additional information.

B. Within 30 days after the beginning of the appraisal period or after an employee's assignment to a new position or supervisor, the supervisor and employee must:

1. Review the position description to ensure all the employee's important duties and responsibilities are consistent with the Agency's mission and goals. If necessary, the supervisor can submit a revised or amended position description to the HRO.

2. Identify and discuss performance elements. Position descriptions, program plans, affirmative action plans, project proposals, competency guides, professional standards, Agency strategic plan, and any other resource that assigns or fixes responsibility are useful in this process.)

a. Generic performance elements and standards are established and can be used to develop performance plans. The supervisor must select at least three, but no more than seven performance elements for the appraisal period. Of the seven, supervisors have the option of using any combination of generic or program specific elements. Supervisors must add specific and result-oriented goals for the particular rating cycle for the mandatory Mission Support performance element. The goals must emphasize outcomes rather than activities. Generic performance elements and standards shall include the following based on the employee's position:

1. **Mission Support.** Include a mandatory mission support critical element for all positions. Tailor this particular element to demonstrate linkage to the Agency's strategic mission and goals.

2. **Supervisory Responsibilities.** Include a mandatory critical supervision element for employees officially designated as rating supervisors or reviewing officials, and who actually provide ratings to employees. Assure that this element fully describes delegated performance management responsibility. **EXCEPTION:** Those employees who have supervisory performance management responsibilities but are not titled "supervisor" for classification purposes must have performance management responsibilities incorporated into another element (**example:** Personal Contacts or Program Management). The element will then be made critical.

3. **Civil Rights Responsibilities.** Include a mandatory critical civil rights element for employees who are rating supervisors or reviewing officials.

4. **Personal Contacts (Civil Rights).** Include the mandatory critical personal contacts element for employees who do not rate officials or reviewing officials. This element contains civil rights expectations.

5. **Safety and Health Responsibilities.** Include the element for safety and health where warranted by the work environment.

6. **Personally Identifiable Information.** Include the protection of personally identifiable information where warranted by the employee's position.

7. **Employee and Customer Perspective.** Include appropriate employee and customer or stakeholder feedback for employees who are rating supervisors or reviewing officials.

b. Develop program or position specific elements and standards and add to the generic performance element using position descriptions, Agency strategic plans, affirmative action plans, project proposals, and any other source that assigns or fixes responsibility in this process.

3. Identify critical elements. In addition to the mandatory critical elements (see subparagraphs III. A. and B.), management officials can identify more critical elements. (**NOTE:** Management officials can identify all elements as critical. However, doing so eliminates the option of rating an employee's performance as "marginal" at the end of the rating cycle.) Critical elements receive a weight of "two" appraisal units and non-critical elements receive a weight of "one" appraisal unit. A critical element meets the following criteria:

a. It is regular and recurring.

b. It is a primary purpose of the position.

c. It is of such importance that if the employee does not perform the duties at the Fully Successful level, they have failed to do their job and should be provided remedial training, reassigned, demoted, or removed.

C. The supervisor discusses the appraisal process with the employee, which covers the following points:

1. Elements will be rated at one of three levels: Exceeds, Meets, or Does Not Meet Fully Successful.

2. After elements are rated, the Decision Table on the appraisal form is used to determine the summary rating level. (**NOTE:** A critical element has twice as much weight as a non-critical element.) This weighting system is built into the Decision Table. Summary rating levels are assigned at one of five levels: Outstanding, Superior, Fully Successful, Marginal, or Unacceptable.

3. A critical element rated as Does Not Meet Fully Successful will result in a summary rating level of Unacceptable.

#### IV. **DOCUMENTATION OF ELEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

Supervisors must record establishment of performance plans, progress reviews, discussions, and performance ratings on the appraisal forms.

A. The rating supervisor completes the performance plan and discusses it with the employee. Both should sign and date the appraisal form. The employee's signature indicates receipt and understanding of the elements and standards, not necessarily satisfaction or approval. The date of the employee's signature marks the beginning of the appraisal period for the standards. (**NOTE:** Where there is disagreement on the contents of performance elements and standards, the rating supervisor's decision prevails.) If the employee refuses to sign the appraisal form at the beginning of the appraisal period, the rating supervisor should note this in the employee's signature block. Lack of the employee's signature and date on the appraisal form does not prevent the implementation of the performance plan as long as the supervisor and employee have discussed the elements and standards.

B. The reviewing official:

1. Reviews significant changes or new elements and standards for completeness, fairness, consistency among different rating supervisors, adherence to organizational goals, and conformance with the policies and procedures of this directive.

2. Makes necessary changes, signs and returns the form to the rating supervisor.

C. The rating supervisor discusses changes made and provides a copy of both the appraisal and standards forms to the employee.

### **Section Two—Conducting Reviews**

#### V. **PROGRESS REVIEWS**

Special emphasis should be given to the assessment of competencies during the progress review. If certain competencies are assessed as low or missing, appropriate interventions must be planned and executed. This increases the likelihood that the employee will achieve desired results by the end of the rating period.

A. **Purpose.** A progress review:

1. Assures at least one discussion between the rating supervisor and the employee regarding the employee's progress toward achieving the performance standards. The review does not involve the issuance of a rating of record.

2. May generate amendments to performance elements, performance standards, or critical elements. Supervisors revise performance elements and standards when a work assignment changes significantly, regardless of whether an official personnel action was effected.

B. **Timing.** 5 CFR 430.207 requires at least one progress review per rating cycle. The progress review should take place approximately midway through the appraisal period. However, continuous feedback is essential throughout the performance cycle.

C. **Documentation.**

1. The employee and supervisor initial and date the appropriate block on the appraisal form to document completion of the progress review(s).

2. The supervisor documents, in writing, any changes to the performance standards and records the changes on the standard forms. The supervisor obtains the reviewing official's approval for significant changes impacting the original intent of the standard or the establishment of new performance elements.

VI. **ANNUAL RATING OF PERFORMANCE**

The rating supervisor must complete the annual performance rating within 30 days after October 1. This paragraph outlines the annual performance rating process.

A. **Employee Self-Assessment.** Employees are encouraged to maintain a personal record of accomplishments, achievements, and performance throughout the appraisal period. Rating supervisors must provide employees the opportunity to provide feedback on accomplishments covering their performance and contributions to the organization for the current appraisal period. Accomplishments should be relative to individual performance expectations and performance measures, Department, Agency, or staff office goals. This input will assist the rating supervisor in evaluating more fully the employee's performance and the results of that performance.

B. **Assignment of Rating.** The rating supervisor:

1. Reviews the employee's accomplishments during the appraisal period.

2. Compares the employee's performance results with the established standards and rates each performance element at Exceeds, Meets, or Does Not Meet Fully Successful.

a. **Exceeds Fully Successful.** Performance exceeds performance standards established for the meets level as described within the performance plan.

b. **Meets Fully Successful.** Performance meets performance standards established for the fully successful level. Performance standards, at a minimum, are always defined at the meets level.

c. **Does Not Meet Fully Successful.** Performance falls below performance standards established at the Fully Successful level.

3. Prepares documentation to support a rating of Exceeds or Does Not Meet Fully Successful on the standards forms or on a blank sheet of paper. Documentation is a written statement describing how the employee exceeded or did not meet the standard described at the Fully Successful level. Merely stating the employee exceeded the Fully Successful standard, or restating the defined Exceeds level provided for the element, **is not** sufficient. Exceeds documentation must be descriptive to provide specific details and information about the employee's accomplishments and clearly describes the impact the accomplishments have in achieving the Agency's public health mission or organizational goals.

C. **Summary Level Rating.** The rating supervisor:

1. Determines summary level rating using the Decision Table on the rating form after all elements are rated. The Decision Table contains five summary rating levels.

2. Records the summary level rating on the appraisal form, signs and dates the appropriate block.

3. Records supporting documentation (if required), on the standards forms or on a blank sheet of paper, signs and dates the forms. (**NOTE:** The rating cannot be discussed with the employee until after concurrence by the reviewing official.)

D. **Review.** After completing the rating, the supervisor forwards the appraisal and standards forms to the reviewing official whom:

1. Reviews the rating for:

a. Consistency among appraising supervisors.

b. Fair consideration of documented conditions beyond the employee's control (**example**: the inability of the rated employee to complete a project due to budget constraints which required the termination of a project or activity).

c. Accurate application of the established performance standards.

d. Completeness of forms and adherence to the policies and procedures of the plan.

2. Requests from the supervisor any justification of ratings or supplemental documentation of accomplishments deemed necessary.

3. Identifies, makes, and explains any necessary changes.

4. Signs the forms and forwards to the pay pool panel, as described in the PHHRS Implementing Guidance, for employees covered under PHHRS, or returns them to the rating supervisor, for employees not covered under PHHRS.

5. In situations when the rating supervisor is unable to conduct a rating for their employees, the reviewing official will serve as the rating supervisor for those employees.

E. **Discussion.** When the rating is returned to the supervisor, the supervisor:

1. Meets with the employee and conducts a performance evaluation discussion. The discussion should include:

a. An analysis of office, program, or organizational results.

b. How the employee contributed to the achievement of office, program, or organizational results.

2. Obtains the employee's signature certifying that:

a. The supervisor has discussed the performance rating with the employee.

b. Any questions regarding USDA and FSIS directives on employee responsibilities and conduct have been answered.

c. Employee's training needs have been discussed.

d. Employee's position description is an accurate reflection of assigned duties and responsibilities.

F. **Distribution of Forms.** Forms are distributed as follows:

1. The rating supervisor submits one copy of the forms, and any supporting documentation to HRO for processing into the National Finance Center database. This documentation will be filed in the employee's performance folder. (**EXCEPTION:** HRO does not require copies of standards forms to be submitted at the end of the appraisal cycle for Office of Field Operation positions that have pre-approved standards posted in Outlook's Public Folders.)
2. The rating supervisor retains one copy of forms and any supporting documentation, and provides the original copy of the forms and supporting documentation to the employee.

VII. **UNACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE**

A. Supervisors must inform employees in writing if performance on a critical element falls below the Fully Successful level as soon as that fact becomes apparent and place the employees under a PIP. The PIP provides the employees a reasonable opportunity to improve performance to the Fully Successful level before the employees receive a rating of record of "Unacceptable." The supervisors must:

1. Identify the performance elements and standards that were not accomplished at the Fully Successful level and provide reasonable means to assist employees in improving performance to the Fully Successful level. Such assistance can include training, closer supervision, revision of assignments, or coaching.
2. Describe specific incidents that illustrate the failure to meet the standards.
3. Describe what the employees must do to bring performance in the critical element(s) to the Fully Successful level.

B. Employees must receive a reasonable time (usually no less than 30 days) to demonstrate performance at the Fully Successful level. For advice and assistance in implementing a PIP, contact LERD at 202-720-5657.

C. Employees who are nearing the end of the rating period can have their rating period extended to cover the entire PIP period. (**EXAMPLE:** An employee is put on a PIP on August 15 and the PIP period is 60 days. The employee's rating period will be extended to October 15, and the employee will be rated at that time.)

### Section Three—Special Circumstances and Grievances

#### VIII. INTERIM RATINGS

##### A. General.

1. The supervisor gives interim ratings when the appraisal period is at least 90 days and one of the following conditions applies:

a. The employee's supervisor relinquishes their duties as the immediate supervisor (**examples:** the supervisor is promoted or retires).

b. The employee leaves for a position other than a permanent promotion with different duties.

c. The employee is detailed or temporarily promoted to a position for 90 days or more.

2. When applicable, the supervisor:

a. Initiates an interim rating on the appraisal form and annotates "Interim Rating" on the top of the form.

b. Discusses the interim rating with the employee and provides the employee a copy.

c. Forwards the interim ratings to the employee's current supervisor to combine with any additional ratings at the end of the appraisal period. (**NOTE:** Do not submit interim ratings to the HRO until all pertinent ratings are combined.)

**B. Details or Temporary Promotions for 90 Days or More.** The supervisor responsible for the detail or temporary promotion lasting 90 days or more, to other positions in the Agency or the Department must:

1. Establish performance elements and standards for the employee detailed to their staff.

2. Prepare elements and standards and communicate them to the employee, in writing, within 30 days of the beginning of the detail or temporary promotion.

3. Prepare an interim rating to document the employee's accomplishment at the end of the detail or temporary promotion. Combine the interim rating with other ratings to determine the employee's rating of record.

**C. Combining Interim Ratings.** The rating supervisor combines interim ratings to form the annual rating of record using a system weighted by time spent in each position.

## IX. OTHER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A. **Transfer of Rating.** If an employee moves to another Federal agency, department, or a different organization in FSIS at any time during the appraisal period, the employee's former supervisor must prepare a rating of record. The gaining agency or organization must consider this rating when determining the next rating of record.

B. **Employees Who Cannot Be Rated.** Occasionally a rating of record cannot be prepared at the time specified in this directive. In this case, the supervisor extends the appraisal period for the time necessary to meet the 90-day minimum appraisal period and prepares a rating of record after this period of time. **NOTE:** The appraisal period for employees covered under PHRS cannot be extended past the end of the rating cycle.

C. **Employees Permanently Promoted During the Appraisal Cycle.** If an employee receives a permanent promotion to another position with different duties and responsibilities (other than a career ladder promotion) during the rating cycle, performance elements and standards will be established and the employee will be rated based on the duties of the higher graded position for that rating cycle. However, if the promotion occurs within 90 days of the new performance cycle, the supervisor will prepare a rating of record based on work performed in the previous position.

### **EXAMPLES:**

1. An employee is promoted from a GS-1863-7 position to a GS-1862-8 position 4 ½ months before the new rating cycle begins. The rating of record will cover the 4 ½ months in the GS-8 position; the work at the GS-7 level is not rated.

2. An employee is promoted from a GS 1863-7 position to a GS-1862-8 position two months before the new rating cycle begins. The rating of record will cover the 10 months in the GS-7 position; the work at the GS-8 level is not rated.

3. An employee promoted from a bargaining unit position to a non-bargaining unit position covered under PHRS within 90 days of the new performance cycle. The rating of record will cover the bargaining unit position and the position under PHRS will not be rated. The employee will be included in the pay pool panel process and award process for that rating year.

D. **Temporary Promotions or Details of Less than 90 Days.** Employees who are detailed or temporarily promoted for less than 90 days during the appraisal period cannot receive an interim rating for that period. However, the supervisor during the period the employee was detailed or temporarily promoted can give a written advisory rating to the rating supervisor of record. The supervisor at the end of the appraisal period can consider an advisory rating before assigning element ratings.

E. **Collateral Duties.** Collateral duties (such as Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee or Special Emphasis Program Manager responsibilities) can comprise a separate element. The official supervising the conduct of collateral duties is responsible for developing standards and assigning a rating for the element. The employee's day-to-day supervisor decides whether these duties have constituted a significant portion (generally equivalent to 1 month's work or 10 percent of official time) of the employee's time and should be included as part of the summary rating. Collateral duties cannot be designated as critical elements.

F. **Appraising Disabled Veterans.** The performance appraisal and resulting rating of a disabled veteran cannot be lowered because the veteran was absent from work to seek medical treatment.

X. **AGENCY PROGRAM EVALUATION**

PCPB will ensure that the FSIS Performance Management Program is evaluated for effectiveness and for compliance with 5 CFR 430 and other FSIS, Departmental, and OPM policies, and the provisions of 5 U.S.C. Chapter 23 that set forth the merit system principles and prohibited personnel practices.

XI. **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

A. Employees can initiate an informal discussion about a performance rating with their supervisor or reviewing official. Informal resolutions are encouraged at any stage.

B. Grievances of performance appraisals can be processed under the Administrative Grievance System, see FSIS Directive 4771.1, or applicable negotiated grievance procedures.

C. Employees covered under PHRS can request a reconsideration of their performance appraisal using PHRS implemented guidance.



Assistant Administrator  
Office of Management

### **FSIS Generic Elements and Standards**

Apply the following generic performance standards with relevant “bulleted goals or objectives.” These can be derived from:

1. Organizational mission statements.
2. Program plans.
3. Project plans.
4. Strategic plans.
5. Product and service standards.
6. Related references including:
  - a. Specific tasks.
  - b. Projects.
  - c. Programs assigned and explained to the employee.

At the end of the rating cycle, assignment of EXCEEDS levels must be accompanied by specific examples that demonstrate how the employee achieved EXCEEDS. The documentation must clearly describe the impact the employee’s accomplishments had in achieving the Agency’s public health mission or organizational goals.

#### **ELEMENT (1) Mission Support (Mandatory critical for all employees)**

**Meets Standard:** Has demonstrated basic understanding of mission and organizational goals and priorities that support or directly protect the public’s health from foodborne hazards and intentional harm. Assignments were completed in accordance with applicable Agency regulations, policies, procedures, and guidelines. Work product was responsive to the supervisor’s and the organization’s stated priorities and requirements. Adhered to safety and occupational health practices and procedures, and maintained a safe and healthful work environment.

**Exceeds Standard:** The assigned specific mission support goals and objectives were significantly exceeded in terms of quality, timeliness, cost effectiveness, customer satisfaction, or other measurable result. Virtually all applicable quantitative or qualitative criteria were exceeded.

## **ELEMENT (2) Communications**

**Meets Standard:** Oral and written communications were clear, correct, timely, and presented in an understandable manner. Employee listened effectively and clarified information as needed. Supervisor and coworkers were kept informed of issues and problems when necessary. Information and guidance provided was timely and correct.

**Exceeds Standard:** Employee was skilled in communicating effectively with diverse audiences, including people with technical and non-technical backgrounds. Employee demonstrated a full range of communication skills, including such advanced techniques as preventing and resolving conflicts, influencing parties to take appropriate action, interpreting non-verbal communication, and successfully negotiating agreements and partnerships.

## **ELEMENT (3) Supervision (Mandatory critical element for rating supervisors)**

**Meets Standard:** Supervisor contributed to the organization's staffing plan. (A staffing plan describes the number and types of employees and positions a supervisor has in their office to carry out the mission.) Work was assigned in a fair and effective manner among qualified employees. Technical guidance to subordinate staff was given in a timely manner. Performance management was implemented by procedures, especially in the preparation and explanation of performance standards, the communication of performance feedback, the coaching of improved performance, and the completion of accurate and timely performance appraisals. The supervisor completed any required supervisory training. Issues, concerns, or problems were handled promptly. To the extent possible, staff was properly trained and complied with occupational health and safety programs. Management decisions were supported and implemented within appropriate timeframes.

**Exceeds Standard:** The supervisor's staffing plans or work schedules were especially effective in anticipating mission, organizational, technologic, and personnel changes. This allowed the organization or unit to maximize on-board strength and retain key talent. The supervisor's accomplishments in defining, developing, coaching, appraising, and rewarding performance of subordinates served as a model to other supervisors. Relative to the organization's assigned resources, the unit's overall performance was significantly enhanced by the supervisor's administrative, management, and motivational skills—the organization directed achieved superior results.

## **ELEMENT (4) Program Management**

**Meets Standard:** Managed program(s) and resolved issues and problems within the employee's control. Monitored all aspects of program(s) for quality, effectiveness, and consistency. Program plans and guidance were responsive to objectives and requirements of the Agency. Policy instructions were appropriately issued and were accurate. Evaluated effectiveness of work and adjusted plans accordingly.

**Exceeds Standard:** Demonstrated such thorough, logical, and effective project or program planning and management that employee's work methods, processes, and work products served as an example to others. Adapted conventional techniques to new and changing situations, using appropriate technology, policies, or science in achieving superior program or project results. Achieved successful program results by overcoming obstacles and facilitating and enabling the key contributions of customers, suppliers, or partners.

#### **ELEMENT (5) Special Projects**

**Meets Standard:** The special projects were completed on time in a competent, accurate, and thorough manner. Completed projects complied with regulations and procedures. Special projects were completed independently, or reflected research and collaboration with others as required.

**Exceeds Standard:** An employee anticipated and exceeded the needs of the project's internal or external customers in terms of project quality, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, or overall success. Employee regularly adjusted project priorities and schedules as appropriate, especially as resources changed or as the project was integrated with related programs and activities. Because of the employee's outstanding efforts, the project had greater than expected positive impact on the organization or its customers.

#### **ELEMENT (6) Research and Analysis**

**Meets Standard:** Researched and analyzed issues, reports, problems, questions, or other assignments in a timely manner. Made use of available reference sources. Raised questions or issues with supervisor or senior staff so that any encountered problems could be addressed. Recommendations, decisions, and work products were appropriately science-based, logical, and defensible.

**Exceeds Standard:** Demonstrated such thorough, logical, and professional research and analysis that employee's methods, processes, and work products serve as an example to others. Displayed persistence in tracking down hard-to-obtain information. Adapted conventional research and analysis techniques to new and changing situations, using appropriate technology, policies, or science in developing recommendations, conclusions, determinations, and final reports. Made effective recommendations for solving problems beyond immediate scope of responsibility.

## **ELEMENT (7) Customer Service**

**Meets Standard:** Worked with customers to develop a mutual understanding of their requirements. For discrete assignments, provided requested information, work products, or advice that was timely, responsive, and accurate. For recurring products and services, maintained existing standards of customer service for delivery of products and services. Achieved quality end products and demonstrated a commitment to continuous improvement of the organization's products and services. Kept supervisor and/or team leader informed of difficult and/or controversial issues and unique problems. Took action to effectively resolve problems before they had an adverse impact on the organization or other employees.

**Exceeds Standard:** Demonstrated such thorough customer service that the employee's methods, processes, and work products serve as an example to others. Adapted conventional customer service techniques to new and changing situations, using appropriate technology, policies, or science in developing recommendations, conclusions, determinations, and final reports. Recommended improvements to the existing customer service delivery system. Anticipated and responded to changing customer requirements, avoiding any gaps in service.

## **ELEMENT (8) EO/CR (Mandatory critical element for rating supervisors)**

**Meets Standard:** Performed all duties in a manner which demonstrated fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, office visitors, and all others in the performance of official business. Demonstrated a commitment to EO/CR policies and responsibilities of Agency and Departmental goals of valuing a diverse, yet unified workforce.

**Exceeds Standard:** Supervisor was particularly effective in creating an atmosphere within the unit that encouraged diversity, sharing of information, ideas, or talents; and appropriate use and resolution of conflict. Supervisor challenged Agency, Program Area, or organizational actions that were exclusionary, even at the risk of own self-interest. Overall, the supervisor's actions and organizational results for this element served as an example to others.

## **ELEMENT (9) Personal Contacts-EO/CR (Mandatory critical element for nonsupervisory employees)**

**Meets Standard:** Projected a positive and professional image of USDA. Performed all duties in a manner which consistently demonstrated fairness, cooperation, and respect toward coworkers, customers, and all others in the performance of official business. Complied with EO/CR guidelines and policies.

**Exceeds Standard:** Demonstrated such a professional image and considerate demeanor towards others that the employee's manner of establishing, conducting, and maintaining personal contacts serves as an example to others. Adapted existing communication style and techniques to new and changing situations and to diverse individuals and groups. Seized opportunities to coach and develop less skilled coworkers in effective personal contacts, EO/CR.

#### **ELEMENT (10) Resource Management**

**Meets Standard:** Monitored allocated resources, including people, time, technology, facilities, contracts, and funds. Maintained complete and accurate records of expenditures and utilization of resources. Routinely used resources in an efficient and effective manner. Ensured that all resources were guarded against waste, loss, unauthorized use, and misappropriation. Introduced and managed technology solutions when cost effective to do so.

**Exceeds Standard:** Excelled in the integrated management of all resources – people, technology, facilities, supplies, financial assets, time, and customer or supplier partnerships, thereby enabling the organization to exceed performance expectations. The employee served as a model to others in obtaining additional resources, deploying new technology, or meeting the mission despite significant reductions in resources.

#### **ELEMENT (11) Individual Contributions to the Team**

**Meets Standard:** Displayed dependability and reliability. Promoted open communication. Contributed creative ideas and actively participated in team meetings, resulting in added value to the team's products and services. When problems arose, explored causes and assisted in resolving them. Worked with team members to implement decisions. Demonstrated an open mind to new ideas and approaches in implementing the team's goals. Willingly accepted and acted on constructive criticism.

**Exceeds Standard:** Demonstrated advanced skills and especially significant contributions to the team by leading team meetings or activities, identifying obstacles to team performance and taking actions to overcome them, positively influencing others or negotiating solutions to problems, and building effective working relationships among team members. The employee serves as an example to others in effective collaboration and teamwork.